

**The Report of the
Accreditation Visiting Team**

**Valley High School
11020 South State
Sandy, Utah 84070**

March 2, 2006



**Utah State Office of Education
250 East 500 South
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Salt Lake City, Utah 84114-4200**

**THE REPORT OF THE
VISITING TEAM REVIEWING**

**Valley High School
11020 South State
Sandy, Utah 84070**

March 2, 2006

UTAH STATE OFFICE OF EDUCATION

**Patti Harrington, Ed.D.
State Superintendent of Public Instruction**

**DIVISION OF
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Salt Lake City, Utah

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FOREWORD

The major purpose of the accreditation process is to stimulate school growth and improvement so as to increase student achievement.

In these efforts, the school staff makes a comprehensive evaluation of the school's programs, operations, and results. The school determines how actual practices align to stated objectives and resulting outcomes. It is a three-phased evaluation: (1) self-evaluation, (2) on-site evaluation by an external team of educators, and (3) implementation using units of the evaluation to improve the school by effecting thoughtful change.

The evaluation, March 2, 2006, was conducted because of the school's desire to ensure quality education for all students in the school, and to increase student achievement.

The entire staff of Valley High School is commended for the time and effort devoted to studying and evaluating the various facets of the total program and to preparing the materials used by the visiting team. The excellent leadership given by Principal Donald Link is also commended.

The staff and administration are congratulated for their desire for excellence at Valley High School, and also for the professional attitude of all members of the group, which made it possible for them to see areas of weakness and strength and to suggest procedures for bringing about improvements.

While these recommendations may be used to solicit financial support to acquire some of the materials, equipment, and services needed to carry out a more effective program, it is even more important that the faculty and administration utilize them as they continue to evaluate and modify course offerings and administrative and classroom procedures to more dramatically increase student achievement at Valley High School.

Patti Harrington, Ed.D.
State Superintendent
of Public Instruction

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Moya Kessig	Executive Director, Human Resources

VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL
ADMINISTRATION AND STAFF

School Administration

Don Link Principal
Sharon Jensen..... Assistant Principal

Counseling

Sherry Hassard Counselor
David Tangaro Counselor
Lorna Anderson ATE Coordinator/Student Advisor
Vicki Bork..... School Psychologist
Marty Espinoza Social Worker

Support Staff

Karen Allen	Gloria Brown	JoAnna Katsos
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Cory Belliston	Ben Derrick	Choya Reese
Kristen Brenneman	Elizabeth Duncan	Connie Strang

Faculty

Margaret Armstrong	Terry Jensen	Kathryn Randazzo
Renee Caldwell	Ann Jepsen	Pat Raymond
Fred Edwards	Don Johnson	Denna Schmidt
Ben Ennis	Dave Kempner	Reid Shelley
Marty Espinoza	Lisa Kolstad	David Tangaro
Brian Gentry	Joan Lewis	Corrine Titus
Sydel Greco	Dwayne McCartney	
Ann Jefferies	John McNeil	

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission at Valley High School is to empower individual students as agents of their own lifelong success.

Philosophy

The faculty and staff of Valley High School recognize that each student who enters the school is an individual with a name, a family, unique abilities, personal desires, and specific needs. Treating each student individually with respect and nourishing their creativity, Valley High School is a haven and non-threatening atmosphere for the learning of non-traditional students. The rules and policies of Valley High School are designed to build student responsibility by making students accountable for their work and actions, ultimately taking charge of their own learning.

Valley High School, as an alternative to regular high school, is not an easy way out, nor is it diluted learning, but rather it is a better way to educate nontraditional students. To the Valley High staff and faculty, fairness is not to provide the same for every student, but to provide equally for each student according to individual needs.

BELIEFS

- Valley should be a school where success is possible and probable for *all* students.
- Students who need an alternative approach to education are capable of learning, but for those students the right environment is crucial to their success.
- The learning environment should be safe, secure and non-threatening.
- Students should be treated as individuals, not as stereotyped “students”.
- Teachers should strive to know students well, build rapport with them, and respect them as individuals.
- Teachers and staff need to work as a unified whole for the personal and academic progress of all students.
- Teachers should use a variety of teaching methods and adjust methods in ways that facilitate more learning.
- It is important to make connections with students by building learning communities in the classroom and throughout the school.
- The focus of the curriculum should be on what is learned, not simply what is taught.
- The curriculum should connect to real-life applications of knowledge and skills and help students link their education to the future.
- The academic program should extend beyond the Valley campus to take advantage of learning opportunities outside the four walls of the classroom.
- The school should work with the community to be a good neighbor and to provide for the needs of its youth.

MEMBERS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Ralph P. Vander Heide, Ph.D., Consultant in School Accreditation. Visiting Team
Chairperson

Lori Thorne, Assistant Principal, East Shore High School, Alpine School District

Joe Kelly, Principal, Landmark High School, Nebo School District

VISITING TEAM REPORT

VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL

CHAPTER 1: SCHOOL PROFILE

In 1974, Dr. Ivan Cendese was an assistant principal at Hillcrest High School. He observed that students who graduated went on their way and rarely came back, but that students who had dropped out of school were still seen frequently around the school, mostly just hanging around. It was as though a rite of passage was missing for these students. As he spoke to these students about their experiences in school, Dr. Cendese realized that many of them were “system failures” for whom the traditional school simply did not work. He formulated the idea for an “alternative school” that might provide a more suitable educational environment for students at risk of dropping out.

After experimenting with an alternative school-within-a-school, Dr. Cendese found that the traditional setting, even with some alterations, was wrong for certain students. So he pursued a more radical approach—a separate school, on a different campus, with different hours, a different philosophy, and a unique culture. Jordan School District supported the idea, and Valley High School was opened as the district’s alternative high school in 1976. It was housed at Hillcrest High School for two years, but moved to a separate building on the Jordan High School campus in 1978. The instructional model at that time was a “drop-in” program that relied on packets which students worked on independently. This worked, for the very few students who actually followed through with the work. Others still languished, until they were included in regularly scheduled classes with a very small student-teacher ratio. This model of small classes, combined with a flexible schedule and personally involved teachers, seemed to work and grow. In 1980, the school moved to a larger setting in the old Crescent Elementary School building at 11020 S. State, where it is housed today. With room to house actual classes, the drop-in program was eliminated.

From the beginning, Valley attracted teachers with strong backgrounds in alternative education. The existing staff was directly involved in hiring new staff, in an attempt to employ people who shared the school’s vision. Teachers were allowed time in their schedule for regular meetings to continually monitor the quality of the educational experience. Time was also allocated for curriculum development to prevent falling back on traditional texts and other materials. Also, teachers made a commitment to spend time contacting students who were not attending. This became known as “Outreach.” This practice and the low student-teacher ratio are still considered two of the keys to Valley’s success.

Clyde Mellberg took over as Valley’s principal in 1982. He stressed the need for a school structure that could adapt to the needs of the students. He supported more program

diversification, including a super-senior program and a four-day schedule to accommodate daytime and evening classes. During Mr. Mellberg's 14 years at Valley, the school adopted a teen parent program, long-term home and hospital services, and a summer make-up program. The school also began producing its own yearbook and school newspaper.

Following Mr. Mellberg's retirement in 1996, Steve Woods was appointed principal and an assistant principal, Todd Quarnberg, was hired. Mr. Woods helped to add a computer writing lab and career center, as well as more portable classrooms to house Valley's growing student body.

More administrative changes occurred in 1998-99, with the appointment of Don Link as principal and Rich Price as assistant principal. A full-time school psychologist was added to the staff, and Valley began oversight of a teacher at Youth Service's Juvenile Receiving Center. 1999 saw the addition of Power School as the student management system. Mr. Link organized the Alternative High School Planning Committee to lay the groundwork for construction of a long-overdue new building to house the school. As of this date, the district has purchased property for the new building, and planning with architects has just begun. The new Valley High School is expected to open for the 2008-09 school year. Helping to shape Valley's future and preserve its past is a new assistant principal, Sharon Jensen, who replaced Rich Price in 2004-05.

Valley High School has grown from only a handful of students and three teachers in 1976 to a student body averaging over 700, served by a faculty and staff of forty people. Since being accredited in 1977, Valley High has maintained the support of the Jordan District Board of Education and has become an invaluable resource in secondary education in the district. Through the years, Valley High School's staff has remained committed to the philosophy that school failure has as much to do with the learning environment as it does with the students. For this reason, the teachers and administration of Valley continue to foster a school experience where students will be appropriately challenged while feeling supported and safe.

The groups who prepared the self-study appear to recognize that the gathering of information is the heart of the procedure for initiating self-improvement. First, the present reality must be understood. Collecting appropriate data was viewed as essential in the search for evidence. Therefore, the groups looked at some statistics concerning the school and community, such as ethnicity and length of stay at Valley High School, as well as assessments and artifacts. *Assessment* refers to such data as achievement and observation data, participation data, perception data, and exit data. *Artifacts* refers to collections of physical data, such as documents and communications

The following kinds of data were included in the school's profile:

- Statistics on the Gates-McGinite Reading test
- UBSCT data
- CRT data

- Survey of students' attitudes and opinions
- Graduation and enrollment information
- Ethnicity of students
- Enrollment numbers according to zip codes
- A description of the alternative program at Valley High School (including the referral process, daily schedule, attendance policy and outreach process, and graduation requirements)
- Information on all school personnel

Graphic overviews of the data have been developed that clearly portray the relationships among the various sets of information that were collected through the profiling process. Narrative summaries give a meaningful translation of data that should provide useful information for school improvement planning. The Visiting Team observed that stakeholders plan to use the profile data to guide this planning.

The above data was located in both the "profile" and the "data" sections of the self-study. More data was found in the "data" section. It is suggested that in future self-studies, all profile information (data) be placed in the "profile" section. More data (profiling information) was included in the analysis of departments. This data, too, should be included in the profile of the school.

The following enlightening information was taken from the school's self-study:

As the alternative high school for Jordan School District, Valley High School is a school without boundaries, both literally and figuratively. Valley only accepts 11th and 12th grade students upon referral from the eight traditional high schools in Jordan School District. These students demonstrate remarkable diversity but typically share one trait in common: They have not experienced sufficient academic success to warrant continuing in the regular school program. At risk of dropping out of school, these students are offered an educational program at Valley which varies from traditional schools in a number of ways:

- a flexible class schedule;
- smaller class size;
- increased emphasis on basic academic skills;
- an absence of extra-curricular activities;
- instruction more suited to account for intra-individual differences;
- an environment more tolerant of personal idiosyncrasies.

Valley is accepting of students who have academic and personal challenges. Yet the school has low tolerance of behavior that is detrimental to learning. Valley teachers appeal to the students' sense of personal responsibility for their own learning and desire to be academically successful despite a history of setbacks.

The Referral Process

The option of transferring to Valley officially can only be offered by the administration of a Jordan District high school. Valley registers new students quarterly. High school administrators use a referral form to indicate that students meet several criteria:

- academic failure;
- credit deficiency;
- personal or social adjustment problems;
- attempts that have been made by the home school to correct the problems.

Referred students are required to attend an orientation where they are taught the school's principles and procedures and are given tests to determine basic skill levels. They then meet individually with a counselor to develop a class schedule and complete the registration process.

The Schedule

An important ingredient in helping students be successful at Valley is freedom from the rigidity of the typical high school schedule. Valley offers classes Monday through Thursday, from 9:00 a.m. until 6:30 p.m. Some students might choose to be on a "morning schedule" but others prefer coming in the afternoon or evening. Later hours allow many students to maintain a daytime job schedule but still stay enrolled in school. It also allows the school to accommodate more students since the entire student is never in school at exactly the same time.

The typical Valley student has experienced school-related and/or personal problems to the extent that he or she is behind in graduation credits, especially in core subjects such as English, social studies, math and science. Therefore, the class schedule is geared toward these core classes so students can catch up and get back on line for on-time graduation. More importantly, it allows teachers to emphasize essential learning which will be critical to the student's successful functioning once out of school. The relatively small size of the school does not allow support for a wide array of course offerings as in the traditional comprehensive high school. To give students enough opportunity to earn elective credit, Valley offers an extensive work release program. The majority of students are employed and receive elective credit relative to the number of hours worked.

Since most Valley students are credit-deficient, counselors try to meet with students quarterly to review their graduation status and make needed schedule modifications. The school experiences significant increases in the number of students enrolled throughout the year which means teachers must integrate new students into their classes each quarter. The school attempts to accept as many students as are referred, but class size is always limited to no more than 20 students which means some students are denied enrollment, particularly third and fourth quarters.

The Attendance Policy and the Outreach Process

It is very common for students referred to Valley to have experienced serious attendance problems while at their home high schools. While students gain a good deal more schedule flexibility than they would at a traditional school, the importance of regular class attendance is always emphasized. Students are allowed two absences in a grading period. The first absence initiates a process known as “outreach”. On the first absence, the teacher calls the students home to report the absence. A second absence is reported to the student’s counselor who calls home to issue a second warning and make sure that parents understand the consequences of an additional absence. When the volume of calls is high, a counseling assistant will make some of these calls to help counselors keep up. A third absence results in the student’s withdrawal from that class. Students who do not pass at least four classes in a grading period are withdrawn from Valley.

The direct follow-up provided by the outreach process is one of the cornerstones of the Valley program. It is felt that too many of Valley’s students have been allowed to “fall between the cracks” at the large, less personalized traditional high schools. At Valley, a significant amount of teachers’ and counselors’ time is spent on maintaining regular contact and attempting to build trust with students, many of whom view school as aversive.

When students enter Valley, an emphasis is immediately placed on their personal responsibility for their education. Students who make up their minds to attend regularly, follow some basic rules, put a reasonable effort into class work, and communicate honestly with their teachers and counselors will find a school program that is responsive to their individual needs, nonjudgmental, and dedicated to their academic and personal achievement. They will also find success.

a) *What significant findings were revealed by the school's analysis of its profile?*

Perhaps the most important finding is that gaps exist between perceived reality and true reality. Those gaps are being examined in order to close them (i.e., to improve teaching/learning by frankly recognizing limitations and strengths).

b) *What modifications to the school profile should the school consider for the future?*

The profile information, as noted above, is found throughout the report. It is, however, quite comprehensive. The “big picture” is quite well portrayed, but even more information could be given. The Visiting Team recognizes that some profiling information is given in the analyses of departments. Perhaps more of that information should be given in the profile.

Suggested Areas for Further Inquiry:

The Visiting Team commends the school for having in place a data management system to regularly update the profile. Stakeholders, under direction of the school

leadership, intend to develop a longitudinal analysis of trends as part of the school improvement process. The Visiting Team recommends that the various stakeholder groups revisit *Collaborating for Student Achievement* and the NSSE manual, *School Improvement: Focusing on Student Performance* to check lists of information that assure that profiles of schools are comprehensive. (One example is the percentage of students enrolled in special education.)

The school is reminded that self-studies are expected to be data-driven and research-based. Without question, the self-study of Valley High School includes much worthwhile information that has formed a basis for school improvement initiatives. Adding more data (all concentrated in the profile section) will lead to an even better portrayal of the “big picture” and the school’s limitations and strengths.

CHAPTER 2: THE SELF-STUDY PROCESS

- a) *To what extent has the school community engaged in a collaborative self-study process on behalf of students?*

Stakeholders at Valley High School who have been included in evaluations of the school and the self-study process include the broad community, especially parents, to the greatest extent possible.

Both the school’s self-study report and meetings the Visiting Team held with stakeholders indicate that all of the teachers, administrators, and students, as well as the school’s support staff, were involved to some extent in the self-study. The Visiting Team concluded, however, that students could have been involved to a greater extent. The Visiting Team recognizes the difficulty of involving parents of students in this alternative school setting. Many are not cooperative. It is commendable that some parents were involved in previous years, and that there is a continued effort by the school to recruit parents to help in the total education of these students.

- b) *To what extent does the school's self-study accurately reflect the school's current strengths and limitations?*

The staff recognizes its strengths and areas in which teachers are effective, yet they also have a frank and accurate view of limitations and areas that must be strengthened. It appears to the Visiting Team that stakeholders are involved in a process of continuous improvement and are personally committed to the improvement of student achievement.

CHAPTER 3: INSTRUCTIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Valley High School's desired results for student learning are as follows:

- Critical thinking/Problem solving
- Practical applications of knowledge
- Personal responsibility and self-advocacy

Nine specific goals (indicators of achievement) are given for each DRSL, such as:

- Students will improve basic literacy and numeracy skills.
- Students will learn and practice career skills.

A consensus-building process was established for defining the DRSLs that involved all stakeholders. It appears that the process of identifying learning outcomes was initiated after first reviewing the school's beliefs, mission, and profile, as well as studying some research on effective practices and what students need to know to prepare for post-high school life (e.g., student learning needs were analyzed and the DRSLs are research-based).

The DRSLs cross all discipline content area boundaries and focus on curriculum, instruction, and assessment. They reflect the Utah Life Skills and provide the foundation for improvement in teaching/learning.

Shared Vision, Beliefs, Mission, and Goals:

- a) *To what extent did the school facilitate a collaborative process to build a shared vision for the school (mission) that defines a compelling purpose and direction for the school?*

A consensus-building process has been established that involves the school community in defining the school's beliefs, mission and goals. The mission statement describes the purpose and direction for the school, and reflects a focus on student learning as the top priority for the school. It reflects the information gathered for the school profile. The beliefs, mission, and learning outcomes are aligned. They are clearly stated and free of jargon. The school's belief statements address key issues pertinent to effective decision-making and policy development. It appears that the implications of the school's conviction to act upon the beliefs

were fully considered prior to finalizing the list of beliefs. The mission and beliefs describe a compelling purpose and direction for the school.

The mission concisely states how the school and its people, processes, and systems organize and operate to achieve its vision of improving lives and preparing young people for their futures. The Visiting Team concludes that the mission statement should inspire, motivate, and provide a focus for decision making.

The Visiting Team commends the addition to the mission and beliefs of the school's "philosophy." It outlines lucidly exactly what the school is and does—for example, the school "recognizes that each student who enters the school is an individual"—and notes that the rules of the school are designed to build the responsibility of students.

- b) *To what extent has the school defined a set of beliefs that reflect the commitment of the administration and staff to support student achievement and success?*

This has been competently accomplished, as indicated elsewhere. (See "Beliefs" and the beginning of this report.)

- c) *To what extent do the school's mission and beliefs align to support the school's desired results for student learning (DRSLs)?*

The DRSLs are focused on improving student learning and aligned as indicated above.

Curriculum Development:

- a) *To what extent does the staff work collaboratively to ensure the curriculum is based on clearly defined standards and the Utah Core Curriculum (with inclusion of the Utah Life Skills)?*

Teachers design coursework and tie it to the Utah Core Curriculum and Life Skills. Teachers meet on a regular basis during a structured time to discuss departmental and cross-curricular issues. The Visiting Team highly commends this practice.

The curriculum is adapted for students with learning disabilities and students who learn at different rates. Hands-on learning and practical application are very evident in the school's curriculum delivery system.

- b) *To what extent does the teaching staff work collaboratively to support the development of a curriculum that focuses on the school's desired results for student learning?*

Staff members were involved in the development of the DRSLs for the school. The DRSLs are woven into the school program in the following ways:

- **Critical Thinking/Problem Solving:**
Writing assignments, labs, student portfolios, and hands-on experiments and assignments are all used in the various subject areas.
- **Practical Applications of Knowledge:**
Career exploration class, workplace skills program, and senior portfolios of student work are all used at the school and are tied to this DRSL.
- **Personal Responsibility and Self Advocacy:**
Students are expected to maintain high attendance standards at the school. Punctuality is also an important part of the school program. Students are accountable for their behavior and are held to a standard with consequences. Students are taught that school is really work, and that to hold a job certain behaviors are required.

Teachers work in a highly collaborative atmosphere at the school.

Quality Instructional Design:

- a) *To what extent does the professional staff design and implement a variety of learning experiences that actively engage students?*

Several different instructional techniques were observed, including lectures, small group work, student-centered projects, technology instruction and projects, hands-on experiments, reading groups, student presentations, guided practice, and independent practice.

- b) *To what extent does the professional staff employ a variety of instructional strategies to ensure the needs of different learners are met?*

Students at Valley High have not been successful in other traditional settings. Teachers use many strategies to engage students in the learning process. Teachers at this school go to great lengths to make the subject matter relevant and interesting to students. Many ongoing projects were observed. Hands-on learning and practical experience played an important part of instruction.

- c) *To what extent do the professional staff and leadership provide additional opportunities which support student learning?*

Students have access to several off-campus programs, including a district technology center. Students may also access regular programs at their boundary

school that are not offered at Valley High School. The school also offers programs for students to make up lost credit.

Quality Assessment Systems:

- a) *To what extent has the staff developed classroom or school-wide assessments based on clearly articulated expectations for student achievement?*

All students at the school are assessed for reading ability. Teachers provide regular assessments to measure student learning. The assessment program at the school is purposeful, and is used to adjust teaching strategies.

The Iowa Tests, UBSCT, and regular CRTs are also administered to students. Data from these assessments is also used to adjust teaching materials and strategies.

- b) *To what extent are assessments of student learning developed using methods that reflect the intended purpose and performance standards?*

Assessments are developed with end results or objects of the curriculum in mind. Students are tested on the material that they have been taught. Teachers point out clearly what knowledge students need to know.

- c) *To what extent are assessments designed, developed, and used in a fair and equitable manner?*

Assessments are tied to what students need to know. Students are told beforehand what knowledge they are accountable for. Assessment practices are fair and equitable at the school.

Several different types of assessments are used at the school. Alternative and second language assessments are available to students if they need them.

The school offers excellent remediation for students who do not pass the UBSCT assessment.

Leadership for School Improvement:

- a) *To what extent does the school leadership promote quality instruction by fostering an academic learning climate and actively supporting teaching and learning?*

The Visiting Team observed that school management has appropriate qualifications and experience in education and educational administration. The principal and assistant principal maintain effective communication and working

relations with the staff, and delegate appropriately to colleagues. They manage the budget well and appoint, appraise, and dismiss academic staff members according to district guidelines. It appears that they are greatly involved in design, delivery, and review of curriculum matters.

- b) *To what extent does the school leadership employ effective decision making that is data-driven, research-based, and collaborative?*

See above. This is competently accomplished.

- c) *To what extent does the school leadership monitor progress in student achievement and instructional effectiveness through a comprehensive assessment system and continuous reflection?*

See above. This is well done.

- d) *To what extent does the school leadership provide skillful stewardship by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources of the school for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment?*

The school leadership is very mindful of ensuring that resources are utilized in a safe, efficient environment, especially in dealing with the deteriorating physical plant.

- e) *To what extent does the school leadership make decisions related to the allocation and use of resources which align with the school goals, the achievement of the DRSs, and school improvement efforts?*

To the extent possible, the leadership is aware of the need to allocate resources in a way that aligns with school goals and improvement efforts.

- f) *To what extent does the school leadership empower the school community and encourage commitment, participation, collaboration, and shared responsibility for student learning?*

The leadership is working on this, as noted elsewhere in this report.

Community Building:

- a) *To what extent does the school foster community building and working relationships within the school?*

The Visiting Team was impressed with the feeling of shared enthusiasm felt among the faculty, staff, and students. The students feel extremely connected to the school and express gratitude for the small classes and flexible schedule. The

students are on a first-name basis with teachers and administration in an effort to build a sense of community. Valley High's attendance policy mandates constant contact with students and parents.

- b) *To what extent does the school extend the school community through collaborative networks that support student learning?*

Students are required to attend an orientation meeting to which parents are invited as well. Students and parents meet with counselors during registration. Students will also meet with a counselor again during the quarter. Valley maintains a working relationship with eight other boundary schools from which students are referred. Salt Lake Community College partners with Valley High School to provide scholarships for students who would like to pursue higher education at SLCC.

Culture of Continuous Improvement and Learning:

- a) *To what extent does the school build skills and the capacity for improvement through comprehensive and ongoing professional development programs focused on the school's goals for improvement?*

Professional development programs for administrators, teachers, and support staff focus on the knowledge and skills required to fulfill and increase performance expectations for their roles as mentors, and to contribute to student achievement.

Professional development opportunities have included technology in-services, Six Traits of Writing, Utah Writing Project, reading across the curriculum, curriculum mapping, Goalview, ADHD, gang involvement and recognition, self-injurious behavior, and suicide recognition and prevention.

- b) *To what extent does the school create conditions that support productive change and continuous improvement?*

The administration sustains and supports productive change. The teachers and administration are given thirty minutes a day to collaborate with each other and/or meet individually with students to improve student achievement. Valley High School administrators and staff are consistent in developing yearly Comprehensive School Improvement Plans. The Visiting Team commends these productive practices.

CHAPTER 4: NORTHWEST ASSOCIATION OF ACCREDITED SCHOOLS (NAAS) STANDARDS I-XI

Standard I – Educational Program

Valley High meets all four sections of this standard. The educational program is aligned with the mission statement and beliefs. The Visiting Team observed that the vision for the school has been collaboratively developed. The instructional and organizational practices, as well as the policies and procedures, support the desired results for student learning and prepare students to succeed in a culturally diverse, democratic society. The program of studies meets the requirements of the state.

Standard II – Student Personnel Services

All three sections of this standard are met. Personnel services are designed to give appropriate, systematic assistance to students as called for in the subsections of the requirements. The assigned personnel for guidance includes a minimum of one full-time person for each 200 students enrolled—most commendable. The primary objective of the counseling program is to promote and enhance the academic and personal development of students and to prepare them for post-high school experiences.

The school provides academic and personal counseling as well as career/tertiary education advice for these secondary students.

Standard III – School Plant and Equipment

This standard **is not adequately met**. For several years school personnel, as well as the state accreditation committee, have recognized that, although the school plant provides for a variety of instructional activities and programs, it incorporates few aesthetic features that contribute to a positive educational atmosphere. One questions how well the plant provides for the health and safety of students and all school faculty and personnel. Certainly the building is not friendly to the handicapped. In annual reports to NAAS, the principal has indicated concerns about the building. The Visiting Team concludes that the school plant is barely adequate (or possibly inadequate) for effective support of the total school program.

However, the Visiting Team was pleased to learn that a new, purpose-built school building will be opened in the 2008-2009 school year. The property has been purchased, and planning with architects has begun. Thus, it is apparent that Valley High School should completely comply with this standard three years from now.

Equipment appears to be adequate and in reasonably good repair.

Standard IV – Library Media Program

Valley High School **does not meet** the five sections of this standard. The school library media program is not a primary resource for literacy, information, and curriculum support. It does little to contribute to the achievement of the DRSLs. There is no certified librarian. Teachers have librarians, some better than others, in their classrooms. Students may use the Internet and public libraries. There will be a library in the projected new school, and plans are in place to comply with this standard when the school is relocated.

Standard V – Records

This standard appears to be met. Student records are maintained, handled, and protected in the best interests of students and parents. Students and parents have the right to access personal student records and are ensured the privacy of such, as guaranteed by federal legislation.

Standard VI – School Improvement (This is addressed in the self-study.)

The five sections of this standard are met. The school improvement plan focuses on the total school rather than each of the separate components within the school. Systematic analysis of data regarding the performance of students has been incorporated into the comprehensive school improvement process, as has ongoing examination of instructional practices. The plan is updated and adjusted each year in alignment with perceived needs.

Standard VII – Preparation of Personnel

This standard is met. All professional personnel are in compliance with the licensing requirements of the state of Utah and are endorsed or properly, temporarily exempted for the subjects they are teaching.

Standard VIII – Administration

This standard is met. The administration of Valley High, as noted in Chapter 3 above, provides educational leadership, supervises and coordinates programs, and carries out the necessary and required administrative procedures.

Standard IX – Teacher Load

This standard is met. The total number of students instructed by any one teacher in any one grading period does not exceed numbers set by the Utah State Office of Education and/or NAAS.

Standard X – Activities

This standard is met. Valley High School supports a range of activities that supplement and augment the basic instructional program by providing additional enriching experiences for students consistent with the school’s mission and beliefs. Attention is paid to providing equal opportunities.

Standard XI – Business Practices

This standard is met. The school is financially responsible. Proper budgetary procedures and generally accepted accounting principles are followed for all school funds.

CHAPTER 5: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS – ACTION PLAN

- a) *To what extent is the school-wide action plan adequate in addressing the critical areas for follow-up?*

It appears that the school has completed a comprehensive review of the alignment of the plan with the profile, beliefs, mission, DRSLs, and analysis of instructional and organizational effectiveness. The plan is congruent with these critical variables and is a plan that—although similar to some plans in other schools—is tailored to the specific characteristics and perceived needs for improved learning at Valley High School.

- b) *To what extent is there sufficient commitment to the action plan, school-wide and system-wide?*

The Visiting Team observed that there is broad “buy-in” to the goals of the action plan. All stakeholders appear to understand what needs to be accomplished. They understand the steps outlined in the action plan that have been decided upon by the faculty, administration, students, and parents.

- c) *How sound does the follow-up process that the school intends to use for monitoring the accomplishments of the school-wide action plan appear to be?*

The Visiting Team feels strongly that the goals will be accomplished. The monitoring process and the steps leading to achievement have been well thought out. It appears that all staff members are involved in implementing the SIP. Already, due to the extensive profiling, stakeholders are aware of new and emerging goals that will need to be addressed in future action plans.

CHAPTER 6: MAJOR COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Commendations:

- The Visiting Team commends all school personnel for their hospitality and help, and for their frankness concerning Valley High School.
- The Visiting Team commends the school leadership for giving excellent guidance and stewardship.
- The Visiting Team commends all personnel for their treatment of students and insightful understanding of their unique alternative school students—rigueur, yet “tough love.”
- The Visiting Team commends the various departments for their fine departmental analyses.
- The Visiting Team commends the faculty and leadership for collaborating so very well in many aspects.
- The Visiting Team commends Valley High for the excellent progress it has made since the last accreditation evaluation visit.
- The Visiting Team commends the faculty for the educational displays (including work of students) located in classrooms.
- The Visiting Team commends the school leadership for keeping a relatively low student/counselor ratio.
- The Visiting Team commends many members of the faculty and leadership for their several years of service at Valley High School.

Recommendations:

- The Visiting Team recommends that the new school plant be constructed as soon as possible.
- The Visiting Team recommends that future school self-studies be paginated for ease of use.
- The Visiting Team recommends that the belief statements be revisited and possibly consolidated—or, in some cases, eliminated.

- The Visiting Team recommends that the computer software used by the counselors be updated and improved.
- The Visiting Team recommends that the mission statement, philosophy, and beliefs be posted throughout the school (in classrooms, hallways, etc.).
- As noted elsewhere, the Visiting Team recommends that in future self-studies, even more detailed information be given in the profile section of the self-study.